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RUEHIN/AIT TAIPEI PRIORITY 2290
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RHMF/COMUSKOREA CC SEOUL KOR PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 003438

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E.O. 12958: DECL: END OF THE U.S.-ROK ALLIANCE
TAGS: PARM MARR MOPS KS KN
SUBJECT: SUPPORT FOR GLOBAL HAWK SALE TO SOUTH KOREA

Classified By: Ambassador Alexander Vershbow, Reasons 1.4 (b,d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. It is Post's assessment that the Republic of Korea's acquisition of the Global Hawk system is essential to U.S. interests and to the maintenance of the ROK-U.S. Alliance in the years ahead. Key to the success of the Alliance for more than five decades has been our ability to maintain an accurate picture of North Korea's military capabilities, activities, and intentions. At present, we rely on U.S.-provided Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities, such as the U2 aircraft. However, in 2012, the ROK military will assume wartime Operational Control (OPCON) from the U.S.-led Combined Forces Command, and with it, primary responsibility for gathering intelligence on North Korea. Simultaneously, the U2 aircraft that currently provide ISR coverage of the Korean Peninsula will be retired. Therefore, in order to maintain adequate ISR capabilities -- and ensure that the Alliance is able to monitor and deter the North Korean threat -- in 2012 and beyond, Post asks that the Department join DoD in supporting the sale of the Global Hawk system to the ROK. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) The U.S. and ROK militaries are working together closely to transition wartime OPCON in 2012 without any gap in the effective deterrence of the North Korean threat. This means that the ROKG must enhance its ISR abilities. To do so, the ROKG has expressed interest in procuring an RQ-4 Global Hawk High Altitude Long Endurance Unmanned Aerial Vehicle system (&Global Hawk8), consisting of four Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) and one complete ground control system by 2012.

¶3. (C) In addition to helping prepare the ROKG for assumption of wartime OPCON, ROK acquisition of Global Hawk will also augment U.S. ISR capabilities when the Pacific Command retires its U2 aircraft in 2011-12 and replaces them with Global Hawks. Alone, these U.S. assets will be insufficient to provide adequate coverage of the Korean Peninsula and must be augmented with Korean-owned and operated Global Hawks that will provide real-time data simultaneously to ROK and U.S. analysts.

¶4. (U) The Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) currently restricts the transfer of Global Hawk as a Category 1 UAV system. At the MTCR Plenary Session November 5-9 however, the USG delegation was unable to secure approval for our proposal to amend MTCR Category 1 to allow for the transfer of Global Hawk.

¶5. (SBU) Under national discretion authorities, the USG has

authorized the transfer of Global Hawk to NATO-Plus Nations. Like the NATO-Plus Nations, Korea is a close ally that can be trusted with this technology. As this interagency export policy has already been used to authorize the transfer of Global Hawk, the addition of Korea should not be seen as alarming to the international community because it does not constitute further broadening of national discretionary authorities.

¶6. (U) On 23 July 2007 Senator Kit Bond (R-MO) submitted legislation to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that, if approved, will include Korea in the Arms Export Control Act (AECA) and the Foreign Assistance Act (FAA) as a NATO-Plus Nation. However, because of long lead-times in contracting and manufacturing Global Hawk, the Joint U.S. Military Advisory Group - Korea advises that it is important we act now.

¶7. (SBU) We understand that DoD supports the ROK's acquisition of ISR capabilities so long as they are consistent with its international commitments and national declarations. DoD has further stated that if Global Hawk becomes available it would be exclusively sold on an FMS basis, which will enforce upon Korea strict enhanced procedures for end-use monitoring compliance that includes pre-delivery, annual, and disposal inspections.

¶8. (SBU) After an appropriate USG releasability determination has been made, Korea will still have to amend its bilateral "self-declaration" called the New Missile Guidelines of 2001; a policy that mirrors MTCR restrictions. Korea understands that this will be required, but will not do so before the USG has clearly indicated its willingness to release Global Hawk.

¶9. (C) Given the need for the ROK to acquire this capability in conjunction with its assumption of wartime OPCON, as well as the FMS safeguards and bilateral understandings that would apply, Post fully supports approval for South Korea's acquisition of the Global Hawk system.

VERSHBOW